"GT" 8/7/08

How will history judge our treatment of gays?

BY KRISTIN LYNCH
GUEST COLUMNIST

I was bored. KRCC was playing some Celtic music I didn't particularly enjoy, Facebook and G-Chat were both down for "maintenance-related issues," and I don't have television.

So I meandered onto The Gazette's Web site and discovered that, not surprisingly, one of the most commented articles of the day, yet again, was a report on PrideFest. It had 288 posts. Not far behind was a piece on the progress that has been made by the GLBT community within the last year; it elicited 210 responses.

A simple click on the PrideFest story provided an instant cure for my boredom. I gorged myself on the plethora of entertaining comments. This stuff was better than Jerry Springer in his '90s heydey. On crack.

I laughed. I gasped. I shook my head in amazement as dozens of my fellow Gazette readers chimed in on the topic of gays.

It was nasty. There were some real zingers. Insults abounded. Several posts were removed for violating "user guidelines" (oh, to be a fly on The Gazette Web editors' wall).

There were civics lessons on the three branches of government. And the history of the California Supreme Court. There was passionate Bible rhetoric. And complaints about the activist liberal judges who are out to undermine the will of the people in a giant conspiracy to take over the world (OK, I might have exaggerated that last bit, but just read some of these posts and you'll catch the tone I'm alluding to).

There was even a poster who wondered aloud (sidenote: what's the word for "aloud" in cyberspace?) why, if every minority under the sun gets their own festival — "homo ... Koreans ... Arabs ... and blacks" — "can't white people have pride without being called racist?" (Shiver me timbers, if you're reading, I think you're missing the point on this).

Two-hundred-seventy posts later and I had gotten my fix.

But as I sat there, satiated by enough cyber-fights to last a lifetime, I couldn't help but feel disappointed, and a little ashamed, really, that these were my community neighbors.

Kristin Lynch

What is it about gays that engenders such an outcry in our town? Why does our community continue to be a pillar of hate towards the GLBT population?

Sure, this was just a tiny sample and was probably not the most reliable indicator of the entire Colorado Springs population, but as a lesbian who's been here for a few years, I must admit that it was fairly consistent with my experience. It ain't easy being gay in the backyard of Ted Haggard, Focus on the Family, and other perceived contraptions of the conservative right.

It shouldn't be that way. We are your colleagues. And teammates. And friends.

Most of all, we are your fellow human beings and all we are asking for is to be treated as such, with all the rights and privileges afforded our heterosexual peers.

Freedom isn't a one-way street.

The freedom that allows you to enjoy the benefits of holy matrimony is the same freedom that should allow me to walk down the street with my girlfriend (invisible girlfriend at this point) without being hollered at with homophobic slurs or pestered with signs that proclaim "homos are godless perverts."

The parallels between the GLBT movement of today and the civil rights movement of yesteryear are stark. The lens of history will be our ultimate judge, but I can't help but bet that she'll side with those who choose to fight for, and preserve freedom for all individuals — gay or straight, black or white.

The rearview window of 2050 will paint a disappointing portrait of our present society — one of needles violence, prejudice, and discrimination against gays.

Though not as brutal, it will carry the same tone and message as the pictures I saw in my history book growing up — you know, the ones of blacks being fire-hosed by whites, photos of the Ku Klux Klan, and the separate bathrooms and water fountains.

It won't be pretty.

Which side will you be on?

Lynch is an advisory member of the Gazette's editorial board. Write to Lynch at: opinion@gazette.com

Aug. 16th

Letters

GAY DISCRIMINATION

You spit on me, count on me spitting back

About 15 years ago, gays picked a fight with Colorado Springs, slandering the community on a national level as the epicenter of hatred in the United States, even though conservative Colorado Springs had fewer "hate crimes" against gays per capita than even ultra-liberal Boulder did. Now Kristin Lynch wonders why she isn't welcomed with open arms by people who have been disdained and insulted for a decade and a half by gays. Pretty simple, really: if you spit on me every time you walk by, before long I spit back.

Freedom isn't a one-way street, Ms. Lynch says; neither are respect and tolerance. When the gay community decides it can respect and tolerate people who disagree with their agenda, maybe we'll reach the goal Ms. Lynch claims to want.

Al Ackerson
Colorado Springs

Qwest Mail
by Windows Live

Reply to "You Spit on Me"

From: **Robert Armintor** [redacted]
Sent: Sun 8/17/08 6:28 PM
To: Gazette Letters to the editor (opinion@gazette.com)

Mr. Ackerson's letter to the editor (Saturday, Aug. 16th) was a work in denial. Perhaps he does not remember this bit of recent Colorado history.

Amendment 2 was initiated and promoted by a Colorado Springs group with the deceptive name of "Colorado for Family Values." This group gathered signatures to place an amendment on the 1992 ballot, that would deny Colorado citizens, who happen to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, equal protection under the law because of their sexual orientation. And while, 53% of Colorado voters who participated in the 1992 election approved this amendment, court challenges eventually reached both the Colorado Supreme Court (1993) and the United States Supreme Court (1995). Both of those high courts ruled that indeed, Amendment 2, did violate the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution by denying persons with a sexual orientation that happens to be *different* from other persons equal rights to the normal political process. On May 20, 1996 the United States Supreme Court in a 6 to 3 decision reached the conclusion that Amendment 2's "...sheer breadth is so discontinuous with the reasons offered for it that the amendment seems inexplicable by anything but **animus** toward a class that it affects; it lacks a rational relationship to legitimate state interests."

Denying a group of people equal access to legislation that could prevent them from discrimination, isn't the American way. I believe that people of whatever class, race, religious faith (or none at all), political party, or sexual orientation should be treated equally under the law...nothing more, nothing less.

So, Mr. Ackerson, to use your own words, who spit on who first?

Bob Armintor
1404 North Prospect
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
(471-0836)

"GT" 8/19/08

HISTORY LESSON

Amendment 2, not gays, sparked controversy, city's reputation

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Bob Armintor
Colorado Springs